

Honorable Judge Richard A Jones,
Honorable Judge Vikki Churchill,

Re: United States of America v. Colton Harris-Moore, (Case No. CR10-0336-RAJ)
State of Washington v. Colton Harris-Moore, Case No. -

Dear Honorable Judge Vikki Churchill,

I am writing this letter to the court after pleading guilty to Federal charges and prior to pleading guilty to state charges involving thefts of aircrafts, boats, cars and other serious charges. I would like to provide the court with my own account of various factors including an abbreviated personal history, insights of lessons learned, explanations of my emotional and mental state, how those crimes have affected me and my feelings towards those that I have wronged and what efforts I have made to make things right. I will provide the court with further insight into my plans while I am incarcerated. And any assurances I can provide the court of my sincerity and commitment to the community, and that I will not return to court. I will like to thank the court for instilling in our society rule of law, which has undoubtedly allowed me to stand before the court today alive, for this I am truly thankful.

Your Honor, you will have been presented with reams of materials and assessments from experts, psychologists, sociologists, mitigation specialists, advocates, persecutors, supporters, victims and those seeking to further an agenda. From these accounts, you will have a wide variety of factors to weigh. In contrast to this, I take full responsibility for my actions, these explanations are only to provide you with context, not excuses. Today I stand before you an adult in age, but deprived of a childhood, and being judged upon actions which were immature and prior my understanding their life-long ramifications.

First, my childhood was one that I would not wish on my darkest enemies. I wish not to point fingers or enumerate through the gamut of issues, however, my thirst for knowledge, cries for help, and coming of age was met with inept parents suffering from drugs and alcohol. I did not have a caretaker who guarded my well-being and innocents with lessons of life, nurture and sympathy. My father figure(s) revolving through my home were mere self-destructive mirrors of my mom. To quote advice, cite encouragement, or recount memories of lasting value would be futile. These are neither excuses, rather facts from my life. No matter how many councilors, teachers, or third-party witnesses I came into contact with, I repeated my plight to fall on deaf ears (or those with no ability to effect my circumstance). I did not live in an environment which held values associated with child rearing, schooling or preparation for the world. I was trapped with no outlet for my interests, I did what children do with idle time. Once I fell into the criminal system's trap, the noose only tightened with each incident regardless of severity or cause. My mother became more despondent, unaffected by my cries for help. Nothing anyone could do would change my circumstance, I struggled with blaming the system or the cards I was dealt. My mother, while unable to raise a son, was in fact my mother, and no system should be able to take that away from her. However, despite this, I fought to find myself and envision my dreams.

On April 22, 2008, I absconded from the Griffin House, a month after my seventeenth birthday. I did this in frustration to the councilor's's treatment towards me, while in retrospect this disagreement was childish. Nonetheless, I felt robbed of my youth. I didn't know who I was yet, I didn't know what I was doing, and most of all, I was alone with no-one to talk to. Escaping from the world, I ended up living in the deep woods of various places in the Puget Sound. It was there that I learned the difference between loneliness and solitude, and through that experience, I found my spirit. I breathed in the freedoms of nature, from the still trees to the pulsing waters to the animals wandering and the birds circling I learned lessons. It was here I learned that I was drowning in a world I yet had a place to be. I learned that my attachment to society thus far was through misplaced connections to lost youths and their efforts to convert nothing to profit through mischief, a recipe for disaster. I had no role model, and as a teenager, no-one to identify with. I had no father to teach me what life is, no-one to teach me a sense of manhood, of self-worth, or responsibility. I needed someone who whether or not he knew the answers, knew the questions. I felt trapped, desperate, so to this end I immersed myself in nature. But in the woods, I was scared, hungry and alone. I looked to nature to teach me for better or for worse. I saw that nature concerned itself with the present. My naive logic accepted this present. In time, however, my mind became restless, and I struggled to find a framework to understand the world. I had had unsuccessful ventures into the structured learning and my burden of prior mistakes limited my options. My curiosity and wonder about the world was growing, the more I tried to understand, the more unequipped I was. I was in a vicious cycle. It was here where I began to again channel my energy to my love of aviation. And so at this time I began to spend my time studying aeronautics and anything aviation. It took living in solitude, without the chatter or activity of the world, to come to peace, focus my mind and provide me with confidence to pursue my passion.

During the summer and fall of 2008, I embarked on a personal journey that would pit me face to face with my own mortality. I dedicated each day to bicycling ten miles a day from a mountain campsite to Orcas Island Airport to see planes taking off and landing and on several occasions I stole airplane manuals. During the day I was perched on a cliff listening to NAV/COM VHF airport frequencies which narrated the comings and goings of airplanes at local airports. I was infatuated with airplane operations and dedicated my days and nights to learning everything I could. The study of the manuals, navigation and avionics manuals, and thousands of online videos of aircraft systems operations through the eyes of the pilots were my school. I had never flown in an airplane, no less in a plane while it took off, operated and landed. I had never simulated its operation, but I had read dozens of books and manuals and occupied my mind since I was in kindergarten with dreams of being a pilot. The day came on November 11, 2008 when I was no longer able to resist the pull of the airplane and my lifelong dream of flying.

This day and the ensuing experience became the single most defining event and terrifying day of my life. The conditions were such that an experienced pilot would have known not to fly. However, I was not only untrained and inexperienced, but blissfully unaware of the severity of the weather that morning. The euphoria of the countdown to takeoff and the realization of a dream was nearly blinding. It prevented me from taking seriously the impossible odds that stood against me. My first thought after takeoff was 'Oh my God, I'm flying'. I had waited my entire life for that moment...however, my second thought immediately after was that I was probably

going to die. For the first time in my life I was not only free, but in full control of my fate. Only then did I see, with quite a shock, what I had gotten myself into. On top of that, my GPS failed within minutes of taking off. Against 50+ MPH winds, IMC conditions, and little more than two minutes of total flight time, I piloted the plane through the predawn sky. Climbing to nearly 13,000FT, headed southeast, I fought and flew for my life.

Flying solely off my instruments, without GPS, I managed to climb to 13,000FT. At this altitude I was still in the clouds, though it wouldn't have mattered considering the sun wouldn't be up for another hour. I continued southeast, no longer over the waters of the Puget Sound, I was now over the Cascade mountains. Being completely untrained for instrument flight, I survived only by sheer concentration and determination, while trying to recall everything I've ever read about instrument flying. However, I was in a situation you could never prepare yourself for by reading about. Still battling 50MPH winds and severe turbulence, I fell victim to spatial disorientation; believing I was in a descent, I put the airplane into a climb. My altitude went up, my airspeed went down. The airplane quickly stalled, and I added 'untrained in spin recovery' to the list as the airplane skidded into a spin towards the ground. Several seconds passed, and in that time I saw my life...I saw myself dead. I saw what my life was, what I hadn't yet achieved. I saw something that has forever changed the way I see myself and the world. There hasn't been a single day I have not thought about that morning. When that moment passed, I took in the situation - the fact that I was in a spin towards the ground somewhere over the Cascade mountains...and I believe the shear circumstance of the situation allowed what I can best describe as a second-nature skill to come through. When it did, I operated the cockpit with the speed and aim of an experienced pilot to regain control of the aircraft. I had never read anything in detail about spin recovery, and to this day I remain somewhat amazed I am still alive. Once I regained control of the aircraft, I instantly began a climb - I had lost over half my altitude and was now at 6,250FT...for all I know, mere hundreds of feet from the ground. I do believe that I was sandwiched between mountains at that point, once again having made it out of a situation all odds said I shouldn't have.

The morning of November 11, 2008 changed my life forever. I just recently had it confirmed to me that it caused PTSD, something I always suspected. Despite the violent-nature of near-death, I found myself. That event opened my mind and gave me insight into not only myself, but the world; valuable life lessons that I believe I couldn't have learned any other way. It was through this discovery of both passion, and of a dream; renewed spirit and fortified life that will keep me on a path of honestly in the future. I realized that you only get one life...that you have to have a purpose and drive; a life with meaning.

I did not grow up in a middle class family to attend a picture perfect school, with tutors, mother and father, and solutions to any teenage whim. This did not give me the right to do what I did. While I recount these stories to convey to Your Honor the extreme nature of my coming of age, I also communicate this in hopes to present my conclusions of what this has taught me. While these lessons learned on the backs of my victims is no excuse for my crimes, it is these experiences that I have learned, nonetheless. Your Honor, I don't know where I could have broken the cycle. Each step of the way, I felt that I was more and more entrenched with a path, and the situation had taken a life of its own. Tainted mistakes of my past, which snowballed into new crimes to sustain my present, and while I tried to distract myself with the dreams of the

future, I am before you know paying for all these mistakes. However, prior to being "on the run", I had not yet discovered my spirit, I didn't know who I was or what I stood for, except a pawn in the system. I felt there was no meaning to my life. Today, I have something to live for. I can't excuse how my journey was mixed with the mistakes and life changing experiences. I can however, express my remorse, present to the court who I am, ask for forgiveness and accept this fate.

I would like to express my sincerest apologies to all victims. I had absolutely no right to deprive my victims of their property or to enter their homes. I am especially remorseful of the fear I caused in bedroom communities and I am thankful that no individual was physically hurt by my actions. Reading from the various police and media reports I have realized something I both never fully considered, but was perhaps partially in denial of. I realized with a core feeling of remorse that I was responsible for a deep and absolute fear in the community, and that I had caused uncertainty and trauma on people I once called my neighbors...good people. People on different islands and towns even feared - never knowing if the bump in the night was a raccoon or a person. At the time I never took into consideration what people must be feeling; I knew my intentions and that I would never hurt anyone or intentionally scare someone, and I mistakenly assumed people knew that as well. Knowing now what I never took into consideration, I have vowed NEVER again to be responsible for a person's fear or trauma.

There are in fact no words sufficient to describe the level of remorse or the feelings I have about myself. A local blogger once described my breaking into homes as, "terrorizing local residents". When I read that, I dismissed the article as a dramatization, convincing myself that people don't really feel that way. I know now that people did in fact feel terrorized...scared in their own homes. I can only try to put into mere words my feelings on the matter, and the loss of self-respect after having been responsible for that.

To this end, I have plead guilty and accepted responsibility for these actions. I am sorry to the communities of Camano Island and Orcas Island specifically. I would like to extend specific apologies to the following individuals: Bob Rivers; Marion Wrathbone; Kyle Ater; Mike Parnell and his family; My neighbor Carol Star; Ted Lavigne; The Linnes citizens; My neighbors the Pettyjohn family; The Wagner family; The Free family; The Muscolo family; The Sears family; The Gleyre and Glover families; Mr. and Mrs. McKee; Mr. and Mrs. Pearson; Mr. Nestor; And Mrs. Olsen. I would also like to extend my apologies to the following entities: Ace Hardware; The Port of Orcas and Eastsound Airport; And the Island County and San Juan County Sheriffs Office, who I know were only doing their jobs. Everything I have done since has been to achieve my personal goal of making things right with the victims in any way that's within my ability. I have signed a contract with 20th Century Fox, and have promised to direct all proceeds from the contract to victims of my crimes, with my assurances that I will not make a dime from any telling of my story. My concern was never to personally profit in any way. While monetary restitution has been tended to in principle, I am focusing my efforts now to rebuild trust, and again make right the wrongs, pay my debt to society, rebuild my education and perhaps from a new position of strength, reemerge a new person.

Your Honor, the term of my sentence which you will hand down, I will serve with humility. I

was wrong and I made mistakes beyond what words can express. The indelible mark I made on the communities and the fear I caused homeowners, there is no going back. Through this experience many individuals have sought to contact me to offer aid, advice, comfort, and fill a void that I have lacked all my life. I have been absolutely shocked and surprised by the compassion people abroad and especially people from Camano and Orcas have shown me. This compassion and forgiveness too has changed my life. With your sentence, I pray that you allow me the chance to regain my freedom, change my life through my own actions, and continue to right wrongs. I know that it is not too late.

While I am incarcerated, I will continue to study and complete my formal education any way I can, preparing for application to an accredited aviation college for aeronautical engineering and aviation science. I will use this time to read and enhance my communication skills, where articulation is best merely written. I will develop bonds with people who are positive influences on me and are aligned with my goals of pursuing and education and founding an aircraft design and manufacturing corporation. I will continue to write and correspond with the individuals who have been inspired by my story with lessons learned, for example, not to view me as a role model or what the media has created, but instead to learn from my mistakes and follow their own dreams.

After I serve my sentence, I have new support structures to ensure that I am without desperate need. And as an adult, I am able to build bonds without fear of previous parental vetoes. Those individuals who have changed my life for the better range from my attorneys, John Henry Browne, Emma Scanlan, and Lance Rosen, whose compassion led them to accept this case, and whose advice and mentorship I will always appreciate and treasure, to my close friend Nathalie, who allows me to share my innermost thoughts without fear of trespass. Also, my childhood-friend Anne; My aunt and uncle Sandi and Doug Puttmann, who could have perhaps kept me from the path I blindly went but unfortunately were not allowed much access by my mom; Bev and Geof Davis, who also tried to be there but were drove off by my mom, and have since opened their summer home to me upon release; Gary McMaster; Ryan Kelly; John Farmer; Lisa Morton; Kristilee Williams; Shauna Snyder, and Erin Ando. Finally, 20th Century Fox and Dustin Lance Black, who have provided me an invaluable view into the world of business and professionalism - and Dustin, who has provided me with inspiration he perhaps doesn't know he has passed along. And many others who have been there to offer support and resources through my time incarcerated and beyond, and the hundreds of people from Camano and Orcas who have written letters and have simply been supportive.

Your Honor, these people form the basis of my support network, something I have lacked to this point. These people and businesses all have intentions and interests in my well being outside the criminal system. My support system has organically formed to provide me with an infrastructure to follow my goals and dreams. With a reasonable sentence, I will be able to attend college far beyond what I am able to learn or have access to in the detention system. Attending aeronautical engineering college, earning my private pilots license and professional test pilot certificate, and developing my personal passion for aircraft design through an enterprise are among a few goals I have for myself. Given my age and the non-violent nature of my crimes, I pray the court can see that a lengthy sentence is not as positive for me or the community as some type of service I can

provide to the community at large. I hope that one day I can return to the community some benefit when I am able to better myself through education and achievement. I believe I can still follow my dream if I am not sentenced to wasteful years behind bars.

Your Honor, I have spent weeks thoughtfully writing this letter. Many of the things I have spoken about I have never told anyone, nor is it public information. I hope that nothing I have said is misconstrued - though I described in detail my first flying experience, in no way whosoever am I "glamorizing" that event or anything else I have done. I truly hope that I was able to clearly articulate what I feel for my victims and have learned over the past four years. Please know that this letter comes from the bottom of my heart, with the deepest of sincerity. I plead that Your Honor find compassion and have mercy.

Respectfully submitted,

Colton Harris-Moore